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Lucia A Keegan 07/27/2006 09:44:01 AM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT -  
Conflict in Lebanon - Pakistan: Proliferation - WTO  
PARIS - Wednesday, July 26, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Conflict in Lebanon  
Pakistan - Proliferation  
WTO

(B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Lebanon is again the top news story today as fighting enters its second week. The international conference in Rome, which gathers foreign ministers from some 15 countries, is widely commented. Its chances for bringing about a cease fire are limited, according to French print and electronic press, but progress could be significant in terms of humanitarian assistance and the establishment of an international peacekeeping force. Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki's first visit to Washington is a major U.S.-related story and the economic news continues to focus on the implications of the collapse

of the Doha Trade Round.

Communist l'Humanite's headline asks: "Will the Road to Peace go Through Rome?" And right-of-center Le Figaro notes: "differences remain numerous between the Americans and the Europeans as well as some Arab countries... Secretary Rice's intervention... will weigh heavily on the negotiations... But regardless of the outcome of the conference in Rome, there is little chance that Israel will be diverted from the goal that it has set for itself: to establish a security perimeter in southern Lebanon with or without an international peace keeping force." According to popular right-of-center Le Parisien, the Rome conference is "A Small Hope for Peace." The newspaper cautions readers, however, that differences in opinion on the means for achieving peace are no small matter. Le Parisien calls the absence of "Hezbollah's sponsors," Iran and Syria, from the Rome conference a problem.

Right-of-center Le Figaro notes that "the Foreign Ministers of the EU, U.S., France, Germany and Spain met to discuss an international peace keeping mission... Curiously these are the countries that make up NATO's Rapid Reaction Force... a force that was intended to be fully operational only in the fall." Another article says that "the French are very honored to be under consideration on the other side of the Atlantic for leading a peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon... but this sign of trust would be easier to get excited about if it didn't in fact mean that none of the great military powers wants to take charge of operations against Hezbollah... One official in Paris expresses concern about 'looking like a back-up for the U.S. while working for the Israeli generals...' Of the four possibilities for an international peacekeeping mission: UN, NATO, EU or ad hoc, the French, realistically, have a preference for the latter."

Catholic La Croix focuses on the cost of the war and the resources that will be needed to rebuild the "Ruined Landscape of Lebanon." The article says the conflict further compounds the troubles of a 15-year civil war and the assassination of a Prime Minister. La Croix adds that: "By attacking infrastructures, the Israeli army has imposed a quasi-hermetic blockade on Lebanon." (See Part C)

Popular right-of-center Le Parisien carries an interview with Hezbollah Member of Parliament Dr. Hussein Haj Hassan about the "war of martyrs" in which the Lebanese people "have nothing more to lose." Hassan condemns Israel's overreaction to the kidnapping of two of its soldiers, whom he describes as bargaining chips for the release of Hezbollah militants. Resistance is all that the Lebanese people can do, Hassan believes, because "we are condemned from the start."

Pakistani plans to build a plutonium production reactor are reported on the front page of right-of-center Le Figaro. According to the daily "The specter of an arms race hovers over South Asia... This puts the U.S. in an embarrassing position. It cannot afford to put them same pressure on a strategic ally like Pakistan as it does on neighboring Iran. Teheran may in turn denounce the double standards of the American administration." A separate article in Le Figaro notes that India is concerned that its nuclear agreement with the U.S. may be called into question. The editorial in Le Figaro stresses that the "issue of proliferation has been swept under the rug because of the conflict in Lebanon." (See Part C)

Right-of-center Le Figaro reports that "Washington wants to reinforce its presence in Baghdad." The Iraqi Prime Minister is in the U.S. for the first time "with a list of requests and grievances." "What was implicit at the joint press conference at the White House yesterday was that while Iraq still needs an American military presence on the ground, it is beginning to take a certain amount of distance in terms of political questions."

Left-of-center Liberation reports that "Chavez is stocking up on arms at Putin's place... After going to Belarus and before visiting Iran, the Venezuelan leader is in Russia for two days to buy some one billion dollars' worth of weapons from Vladimir Putin... Chavez has not ruled out the possibility of going to North Korea."

Catholic La Croix reports that analysts are predicting that trade talks will not resume before 2009, "with a new administration in the U.S."

The economic supplement in right-of-center, Le Figaro Economie notes that "French farmers are having a hard time not showing their glee at the failure of the WTO talks... but French small business are disappointed."

In an interview in left-of-center Liberation, Celso Amorim, the Brazilian Foreign Affairs Minister blames the failure of the WTO negotiations of the U.S. "Since September 11, multilateralism has taken a blow, this can be seen on a diplomatic level today in Lebanon where the UN appears to be powerless." The editorial in left-of-center Le Monde echoes the thought that the failure of the Doha Round marks a calling into question of multilateralism, particularly concerning trade. (See Part C)

#### (C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

##### Conflict in Lebanon

###### "Urgency"

The editorial by Francois Ernewein in Catholic La Croix (07/26): "Following the departure of the Syrians after thirty years of pillaging, Lebanon was slowly beginning to rise up again with a promising growth rate, the expansion of the tourism industry, a return to prosperity that had Lebanon thinking that it was clear of danger... But today death, fear, exile make up the new landscape of the country... It is in this context that the critical conference in Rome opens today... The stakes are not just economic, they are also political. The notion of an eye for an eye in the Middle East as well as poverty and desolation are fodder for vengeance that can spiral out of control."

The editorial in regional Le Telegramme by Hubert Coudurier says that (07/26): "A prominent role for France in a peace keeping mission in Lebanon would present a fantastic opportunity for France to get its foot back in the door with regard to the Middle East... France's relations with the U.S. and with Israel are long since normalized and now is the time for it to play a stabilization role, conditioned on France's military capabilities because of its involvement in Afghanistan alongside the U.S..."

##### Pakistan - Proliferation

###### "The Rise of the Nuclear Peril"

Pierre Rousselin's editorial in right-of-center Le Figaro (07/26): "While war takes hold in the Middle East the threat of nuclear proliferation continues in Pakistan as in Iran... The roar of artillery in Lebanon has drowned out Iran's dogged determination to continue its nuclear program and another, just as worrisome development: Pakistan's decision to build a reactor capable of making 40 to 50 nuclear bombs each year... It is the way of war to concentrate energies on the problem at hand, in this case the crisis in Lebanon, even if it means letting the elements of a future escalation of violence elsewhere be put into place;... If Pakistan feels that it has free rein to multiply its nuclear capabilities by twenty, it is because the international non-proliferation system is collapsing."

##### WTO

###### "Agricultural Egoism"

The unsigned editorial in left-of-center Le Monde (07/26): "The failure of the Doha Round will deprive developing countries of the progress that had been made over the course of the WTO meetings these past few years... Indeed, developed countries followed the example of the U.S. and France which were determined to limit the concessions made concerning agriculture at all costs. Worse yet, behind the failure of the negotiations is the calling into question of multilateral trade... What is even more regrettable is that it is those powers that traditionally are the greatest backers of multilateral trade: the U.S. and Europe, that are responsible for its demise."

###### "Fiasco"

The editorial in regional daily La Nouvelle Republique du Centre Ouest by Herve Cannet (07/26): "Protectionism is responsible for the failure of the Doha Round. To say that Washington is mainly responsible for this fiasco is not entirely untrue. The Bush

Administration, like with the environment and the Kyoto Protocol, does not feel like it needs take into account international factors. Its only concern is domestically... From now on trade talks will take place on a bilateral basis, and only between friends."

STAPLETON